



A NOTE FROM ANGELA:  
THE IMPORTANCE OF  
SHARING WHAT WE KNOW

O February/March 2012



GETTING READY FOR OUR  
ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF  
WRITING!



ANTHOLOGY  
SUBMISSIONS ARE NOW  
BEING ACCEPTED!

# WNY Young Writers

FEBRUARY/MARCH NEWSLETTER

# studio

## The Importance of Sharing What We Know

*A Note from Angela*

Many writers and teachers are blessed and cursed by their humility. They are talented, hard-working people who strive to make a difference for those they serve every single day. Yet, they choose to develop and refine their practice quietly, behind the closed doors of their classrooms or offices and within the confines of their homes. They are reluctant to name or share the wisdom they've gained. This learned behavior is only reinforced by leaders who showcase the work of few while overlooking the efforts of others and by peers who have a difficult time negotiating the feelings that arise when their colleagues appear to have learned or accomplished more than they have. Shifting our perspectives can help to remedy this.

When expertise is framed as a commodity that *all* community members are expected to share, thinking begins to shift a bit. At Studio, we believe that sharing what we know and what we've accomplished is not about showing off. It isn't about arrogance. *It's about service.* We all need to give of ourselves. It's not merely our right. It's our responsibility. Some perceive those who choose to keep their expertise to themselves as humble. Others, particularly those who appreciate the value of collective intelligence may have different perceptions. We're all called to contribute to the learning that happens within the communities we belong to. Eventually, we recognize that everything we do and create was inspired by someone else. We realize that we must pay this forward. We must give to others in return.

Growing as writers and teachers and using what we've learned to help others is a fundamental part of the WNY Young Writers' in our community, regardless of their age or title, is

expected to share their learning with us in a variety of ways.

One of our greater missions is to challenge the notion that teachers merely lead and students merely learn from them. At Studio, all young people become teachers and all teachers become learners and writers. This has been a slow and sometimes uncomfortable process. I've discovered something along the way though: the younger people are, the more willing they seem to be to share. At this point, I can say with confidence that those who are most comfortable sharing their expertise remain under the age of 18. And we've learned much from them. How does this happen? With great intention.

**For example, our mentorship program** enables middle and high school writers who are interested in becoming teachers of writing to engage in professional learning relevant to research-based practices. With guidance from Studio mentorship director Sheri Barsottelli, they form and test their own ideas and discover a great deal about connecting with young writers and helping them learn.

**In addition, many of the literacy centers, mini-workshops, and collaborative learning projects are designed and facilitated by the young writers in our community as well.** They unfold in response to breakthroughs that writers and teachers experience as they work with one another at Studio. Several years ago, middle school mentor Laura Stockman studied literacy center design. Then, she created and tested a variety of play-based writing centers that teachers throughout the region are now using inside of their classrooms. High school fellow Matt Nichy ran mini-workshops that enabled him to show other writers and teachers how to video-blog,

and Sarah Hanson used what she learned during a residency-based summer writing experience to make recommendations that enriched our own program. This led to the creation of directed writing assignments that take nothing away from those who prefer to have choice as writers.

**Regardless of the role we fulfill at Studio, we all try to value works in progress, the creative process, and learning over the quick production of final pieces.** This is purposeful as well. At Studio, we value learning most, and we pay our highest praise to those who invest themselves deeply in that very messy, very uncomfortable experience. In this day and age, anyone can publish and anyone can promote their own writing in order to sell it. Producing work worth being read is a far greater challenge that requires a much deeper commitment. This often requires a level of quiet tenacity that few possess. This kind of work is slow and without glamour.

**Our writing celebration**, which takes place each spring, positions each of the young writers in our community as facilitators of mini-workshop sessions and presentations that reveal the expertise they have gained. This year's event will take place on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 10am-12pm at Union East Elementary School on Union Road in Cheektowaga, New York. Each writer will be invited to showcase a particular strategy, skill, or resource that they've come to rely upon as a writer this year. Lots of learning will be taking place that day, and we will be preparing for this event during our March sessions as well.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone this month!



## **GETTING READY FOR OUR ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF WRITERS IN PROGRESS!**

Our Annual Celebration of Writers in Progress will be held on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 10am-12pm at Union East Elementary School in Cheektowaga, New York. During this time, teachers and writers from both Studio locations will showcase their learning by leading mini-workshop sessions focused on specific strategies, resources, or tools that have helped them in their work.

This is a very low-key, informal event that allows all of our fellows to share what they know with their peers in very small groups of about 4-6 members. Each session lasts about 10 minutes, and the day ends with the recognition of all Studio fellows, the distribution of our anthology, and a special tribute to the teachers and the mentors who work so hard to make our program worthwhile. It's a wonderful way to end our season, and we hope that all writers and parents will attend.

During our March sessions, writers will work with Angela to prepare for this event in ways that make them comfortable. Parents will receive a note home at the end of the March session about the content of each writer's session and what, if anything, writers will want to prepare for the event. Parents will also be informed about the time structure for the day and locations will be clarified as well. That said, all of you know that you can email or call me with any questions that you might have, particularly those who are new to this experience!

As we get ready to meet in March, please ask your child to think about their work as writers, the strategies and tools that they use and love, and what might be of interest to others. I'll help them more when I see them as well! Spring is coming!



## ANTHOLOGY SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY MARCH 15<sup>th</sup>

Writers of all ages are encouraged to submit their work for publication in our anthology: ***More than Words: A Celebration of Writers in Progress.*** All genres are accepted, and each writer may submit full length works or excerpts of up to five pages (single-spaced).

Drafts must be submitted to Angela by email only by March 15<sup>th</sup>:  
stockmanangela@gmail.com

All drafts will receive feedback and revisions will be required before final publication.

If you have any questions, please let me know!

**Those who publish with us will receive a complimentary copy of our anthology.**

If you choose not to publish but would like to order a copy, directions for ordering will be provided on the day of the celebration.